Creation of Rural Business Centres

2189. SHRI SANJAY RAUT: Will the Minister of RURAL DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is considering any proposal for the creation of rural business centres for rural development and agriculture growth; and

(b) if so, the features thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT (SHRIMATI SURYAKANTA PATIL): (a) and (b) No decision has yet been taken on creation of Rural Business Centres.

Involvement of NTPC in revival of DPC

2190. SHRI DIPANKARMUKHERJEE:
SHRI CHITABRATAMAJUMDAR:

Will the Minister of POWER be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal to involve NTPC in revival of Dabhol Power Corporation (DPC) of Enron in Maharashtra; and

(b) if so, the details thereof, with terms and conditions of such involvement?

THE MINISTER OF POWER (SHRI P.M. SAYEED): (a) and (b) An empowered Group of Ministers has been set up to examine and decide all issues related to the Dabhol power project, keeping all relevant aspects in view.

National Family Benefit Scheme

2191. SHRI N.K. PREMACHANDRAN: Will the Minister of RURAL DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether any proposal, seeking financial assistance for the payment of arrears due to the beneficiaries of National Family Benefit Scheme has been received from the Government of Kerala;

(b) the total amount of arrears due and the amount requested to meet the expenses of the above centrally sponsored scheme;

(c) whether the Government granted funds towards the scheme during the current year; and

(d) whether Government propose to allow funds as requested?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RURAL DEVELOP-
MENT (SHRI A. NARENDRA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) In order to meet the requirements of pending applicants under National Family Benefit Scheme the Government of Kerala informed that the State required Rs. 46 crores. The Government of Kerala has requested for additional one time allocation of Rs. 50 crores under National Family Benefit Scheme.

(c) The Ministry of Finance has released Rs. 1322.27 lakhs as Additional Central Assistance (ACA) to the State of Kerala under National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) and Annapurna Scheme during the year 2004-05. The ACA provided to the State under NSAP and Annapurna could be utilized by the State on Welfare Schemes of Old Age Pension, Family Benefit or free food grains to the aged by taking up one'or two or all the three or in any other combination in accordance with their own priorities and needs.

(d) The Ministry of Rural Development had been administering the Centrally Sponsored National Social Assistance Programme consisting of National Old Age Pension Scheme and the National Family Benefit Scheme until the Programme was transferred to the State Plan aiongwith the Annapurna Scheme with effect from the financial year 2002-2003. After the transfer of the scheme the total allocation for the transferred scheme is decided by the Planning commission. The funds are being released by the Ministry of Finance as Additional Central Assistance to the States and the States have requisite flexibility in the choice and implementation of the Schemes. The Ministry of Rural Development has no budget provision for the transferred Schemes.

The Planning Commission has recently enhanced the allocation for NSAP and Annapurna for the Annual Plan 2004-05 leading to increase in the allocation for the State of Kerala from Rs. 1762.99 lakhs to Rs. 2872.43 lakhs.

Availability of wasteland and surplus land

2192. SHRI RAJU PARMAR: Will the Minister of RURAL DEVELOP-
MENT be pleased to state:

(a) the estimated details of wasteland and surplus land available in the country, State-wise;